



MANSOURA UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF LETRES

**TRAUMA RESOLVING: “REPETITION COMPULSION”
AS REFLECTED IN DIANA FERRUS’S "A POEM FOR SARAH
BAARTMAN" & ELIZABETH ALEXANDER'S, “THE VENUS
HOTTENTOT”**

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Abstract

The paper is deeply concerned with focusing on the role played by literature to significantly fulfill Freud's trauma resolution pattern together with that of ecofeminist's. Literature, according to it, can play a crucial part in recollecting the trauma and presenting it with a therapeutic change through what Freud calls the “repetition compulsion” stage. The paper presents the example of a female subjugation haunting trauma: the trauma of Sarah Baartman juxtaposed with that of Mother Nature deterioration. In an Ecofeminist perspective, it highlights the interrelation between both traumas as well as between women rights and environmental sustainability. The paper argues for bridging the gulf between woman and Mother- Nature to restore power to both sides. However, resolving the two traumas is set as a prerequisite of female-nature reconnection. Accordingly, the paper's suggested approach builds heavily upon two major theories that have a psychoanalytic as well as ecological standpoint: Freud's theory of trauma and Ecofeminist theory. It critically tackles Diana Ferrus's "A poem for Sarah Baartman" and Elizabeth Alexander's “The Venus Hottentot” seeking to trace the role the two concerned poems may have played to resolve the trauma of black race as well as that of Mother Nature. In so doing, the paper poses the question whether the two poems, apart from the two roles of representing a deferred action and the stage of “repetition compulsion”, participate in further stages of the trauma resolution so as to have the two traumas utterly resolved. It also traces signs of trauma resolving, restoration of power and subjectivity building.

Key Words: Ecofeminism; Saartjie Baartman; trauma; haunting; woman/nature identification; repetition compulsion.

ملخص البحث:

يهدف البحث إلى إلقاء الضوء على الدور الفعال الذي يلعبه النص الأدبي بكافة أشكاله في استراتيجية فرويد لعلاج الصدمة النفسية (التروما) والتي تتضمن سلسلة من المراحل المتشابهة والمبنية بعضها على بعض. حيث يعرض البحث الدور الذي يلعبه النص الأدبي في استرجاع الصدمة (التروما) الكامنة لفترة طويلة في اللاوعي متسببة في آثارا نفسية وخيمة سواء للفرد أو لجنس بأكمله، حيث يعرض النص الحدث المتسبب في الصدمة (التروما) أو حدثا مسترجعا إياها من اللاوعي إلى العقل الواعي حيث يشعر بها القارئ ويعيشها مجددا بكل تفاصيلها وألمها، ثم تأتي مرحلة تكرار الحدث عدة مرات والذي يحمل كل مرة في طياته شيئا من التغيير الذي يعد تغييرا علاجيا به لمحة إيجابية تقلل من حدة الصدمة، وتلك يطلق عليها مرحلة استرجاع وتكرار الحدث بصورا مغايرة تقلل من شأن الصدمة (التروما). ويعتمد البحث إلى توضيح أهمية الأدب في العلاج النفسي للصدمة. وفي هذا الإطار يطرح البحث على التوازي نموذجين للصدمة النفسية (التروما) الأولى تكمن في قصة المرأة الإفريقية سارة بارتمان التي تعد صدمة للقارة الإفريقية السوداء ، أما الثانية فتتمثل في صدمة الطبيعة الأم التي يعاني منها البشر ككل، هكذا يركز البحث على نظرية الصدمة النفسية لفرويد وكذلك نظرية الطبيعة النسوية. ويقوم البحث بتطبيق النظريتين على قصيدة لديانا فيرس وأخرى لاليزابيث الكسندر ملقيا الضوء على الدور الذي لعبته القصيدتين لاسترجاع الصدمتين المعنى بهما البحث وتكرارهما عدة مرات في الحاضر بحيث يرى القارئ الصدمة تتكرر عليه في كل مرة بتغيير ما مما يجعله يشعر أنها لا تنتمي له ولكنها مجرد تجربة يقرأ عنها في قصيدة كما أن التغيير المصاحب يظهرها بصورة تضعف الصدمة وتقلل من شأنها مما يقلل الألم المصاحب لها ويظهرها بصورة جديدة. في هذا الإطار يسعى البحث لإلقاء الضوء على مدى نجاح النص الأدبي في المساهمة في علاج صدمة الأفارقة وكذلك البشرية كلها وبناء هوية جديدة غير مكبلة بآثار نفسية تعوق الشخصية السوية.

Introduction

According to Freud's theory of trauma, the traumatic event is a significantly overwhelming incident experienced by an individual, a group of people or rather a whole nation, negatively affecting the course of his/their lives and identities. The influence is widely reflected in psychic disturbances and disorders causing symptoms exemplified in terrible visions and delusions. Cathy Caruth defines trauma as: “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed,

uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena..." (qtd.in Buse 174). Due to its horrors and shocking quality that could not be consciously faced or acknowledged, the event is kept latent in the unconscious for a long time (a state of latency) waiting for a similar replica- event(a deferred action) that releases the original trauma and moves it from its unconscious state to a conscious one (Freud, *Moses* 109-112). The unconscious and the conscious are linked together when the traumatic event is repeated in the present through a deferred action that, in its turn, releases the content of the unconscious, the shadow experiences kept away from the conscious for so long (Freud, *Moses* 152-53). However, once the traumatic event is resurrected, it is more devastating and brutal than has once been as it should have gained more power and force. Freud writes," It is specially worthy of note that every memory returning from the forgotten past does so with great force, produces an incomparably strong influence on the mass of mankind, and puts forward an irresistible claim to be believed,..."(*Moses* 136). This unquestionably justifies the survival of the memory of terribly influential events like that of the Holocaust, concentration camps and the traumatic memory of Baartman with which the research is mainly concerned. Nevertheless, since the response to the traumatic event is delayed to a later period when recollection occurs; the trauma is then caused by the process of recollection rather than by the first occurrence of it when it is still latent and inactive. In this respect, Peter Nicholls sums up the traumatic event and its remembering in Freud's theory as "a first moment of shock without affect and a second moment of affect without shock" (56).

Yet, to carry a potential therapeutic influence, this repetition or resurrection of the traumatic event should be rendered as a repeated version with a certain change. This is crucially important, as suggested by Freud, to the trauma healing process (*Moses* 153). The representation of the similar yet slightly modified version of the event in the present strips it off any connection with the past as well as with the traumatized figure himself/herself who starts to feel that it is not an experience of him/her but rather an occurrence related to the present and to somebody else. Hence the devised change and the long distancing of the action dissociate the link between the trauma and the traumatized figure (Nicholls 55).

However, crucial to trauma theory is what Freud roughly calls 'repetition compulsion' according to which the trauma is not repeated once in the present but is rather repeated for several times. Accordingly, "In repetition compulsion a subject unconsciously relives, or even acts out, a traumatic, unassimilated experience from the past, not just once, but repeatedly" (Buse174). Such a repetition is bound to provide a chance for monitoring and adjusting the trauma (Buse 174).The return of the suppressed by the representation of the modified trauma more than once in the present is highly therapeutic. It dismantles the trauma's shocking quality in such a manner that makes the traumatized figure/figures feel that the traumatic event is one that does not deserve that much agony and suffering; it seems rather to him as "much ado about nothing". Only at this point, the trauma is healed and its dire consequences and influence upon the traumatized figure might utterly disappear. This achieves a state of intertextuality, as called by Julia Kristeva, between the past and the present and the conscious and the unconscious that also carries a hope for a revolutionary change in the future (Moi 159). As Eyerman proposes, "A traumatic tear evokes the need to 'narrate new foundations' which includes reinterpreting the past as a means toward reconciling present/future needs" (Cultural Trauma 4).

According to Freud's trauma theory, Baartman's case is a typical devastating national trauma that calls for resolution. Born in 1789, died in 1815 and buried on 9 August 2002 on South Africa's women day, Baartman is a black female of Khoisan descent who has the most distinctive physical and anatomical features that are typically Afro American and are, therefore, attractive as something weird rather than lovely. She symbolizes what the Blacks

are and what the Whites are not. As Marta Werbanowska puts it, "For 19th-century audiences, Saartjie Baartman was exhibited as the ultimate other"(19). She is an image of the savage African female and a symbol of a savage people namely the Blacks (Werbanowska 19). However, this uniqueness of hers is the reason behind her ill-being and destruction. Baartman was taken to London and then to Paris according to a contract where she was exhibited like animals into a cage and was used by the Whites as a sexual commodity who performs daily some abusive erotic shows and is rudely and offensively touched against her will. Speculating upon Baartman's tragedy, Deborah F. Atwater argues that, "In France she metamorphosed into a tragic heroine and showgirl, a fallen goddess of love, and the epitome of the African exotic"(12) Though she had herself agreed upon the deal, for the sake of money, she had painfully discovered that she was fooled by the Whites for neither considerable profit nor even prestigious fame (Atwater 11).

To support their hypothetical superiority over the black race, the Whites propagated the myth of difference that belives the Blacks to possess different physical features; consequently, Baartman's distinctive physical traits, especially her huge buttocks, have been studied and set in sharp contrast with those of her white counterparts (Werbanowska 20). Even after her death, Baartman has been exploited to the end; she was rather dissected, by the French anatomist and zoologist Georges Cuvier, and had her sexual organs exhibited as unique and original, for about two hundred years (Atwater 11). Describing her most tragic fate Deborah F. Atwater writes: "Her body was sold to be dissected at the museum, which had no legal right to do so but she was dissected anyway. No rites were performed. They made body casts, removed her organs, and placed her brain and genitals in jars. Her flesh was boiled to remove the skin from the bones. Sara was treated like an animal, like some glorified lab experiment" (12).

Baartman's issue becomes a national trauma that greatly influences the image of black female as she is held responsible for the emergence of such stereotypical images of black female like the "mammy, sapphire, jezebel, and vixen" (Atwater 6). Regarding Baartman's story as the story of African Americans as a whole, Afro-American president Thabo Mbeki writes that, "The story of Sarah Bartmann is the story of the African people of our country in all their echelons. It is a story of the loss of our ancient freedom. It is a story of our dispossession of the land and the means that gave us an independent livelihood" (qtd.in Iannaccaro 38). Describing the negative influence Baartman's story has left upon the way Afro-American women have been stereotyped and portrayed for so long, Marta Werbanowska Writes:

Needless to say, what the "civilized visitors" saw in the Hottentot Venus was not a person with any degree of subjectivity or agency, but a body; and this body—both African and female—was not merely a physical object, but also a site onto which their racialized fantasies were projected. By the early 19th century, the Black female body had already been marked by a complex matrix of stereotypes, misreadings, and myths widely spread among contemporary Western society. (19)

Beside Freud's theory of trauma, the paper builds on ecofeminism, a line of thought that is concerned with natural exploitation and the violence inflicted upon Mother Nature. However, being heavily concerned with gender notions, ecofeminists explain humans- nature relationship and aggression against nature in terms of gender concepts and masculine aggression against woman. Discussing Marti Kheel's ecofeminist perspective, Richard P. Haynes identifies woman with nature believing both to be equally oppressed. He writes that Kheel's perspective refers to:

. . . a perspective that not only rejects what she sees as the dominant masculinist ideology that regards nature either as wild, and hence to be conquered or killed, or

lifeless, and hence to be used as a resource, but also as a positive vision of genuine inclusivity and how it might be attained. This masculinist ideology, a dominant way of thinking in our culture and historical time, also tends to regard women in an analogous way. (469)

Ecofeminism condemns the strategic masculine rationalization that reduces nature to be wild and brutal to justify its disintegration; this bears much resemblance to Ray Ralph's argument that "women represent emasculation (lack), immaturity, and perpetual dependency—all of the things that a 'man' must overcome or escape" (McDonough 13). Identifying Baartman with nature, Marti Kheel writes, "individuals are also nature, including those used in laboratories for science" (469). Karen J. Warren argues that ecofeminists associate the subjugation and oppression of women with that of nature and natural objects. She writes, "Ecological feminists ('ecofeminists') claim that there are important connections between the unjustified dominations of women, people of color, children, and the poor and the unjustified domination of nature" (*Ecofeminist Philosophy* 1). Warren classifies subjugated objects into 'human others' and 'earth others'. The former refers to minority groups like women, the Blacks or any other prejudiced segment of society while the latter implies ill-used natural objects like trees, streams, animals, forests, etc (*Ecofeminist Philosophy* 1). Ecofeminists, in Warren's view, believe that African women, in particular, are closely related to nature due to their great contribution to agriculture in works as "in ploughing, planting, caring for farm animals, harvesting, weeding, processing, and the storing of crops" (*Ecofeminist Philosophy* 10). This makes nature their home as would be seen later on in Ferrus's poem.

Ecofeminist theory is an empowering theory whose role is to empower both women and nature after the trauma resolving stage. It calls for uniting nature and humans as one way of terminating the oppression and tyranny inflicted upon both sides and achieving wholeness. Nature and human beings should be one whole, however, wholeness that is crucially hindered by unconscious traumas can only be achieved through "the integration of human and nonhuman identities" (Curry 160). Hence, what is needed is a type of identification between human others and ecological others (natural objects), as a self-empowering identity building technique that might make up for any human self-devaluation and environmental degradation. However, Speculating upon the alienation and estrangement that have lately taken place, in a post-industrial society, between humans and Mother Nature, Patricia Jagentowicz Mills argues that "Nature becomes an external Other, merely the 'stuff of domination', and we become blind to our true goals, those that will lead to self-realization and liberation" (162). Uniting with nature, as an ecofeminist claim, is not merely desired for achieving wholeness, it is rather a means of the attainment of human rights especially for women. Karen J. Warren argues that, in line with Rosemary Ruether, Ecofeminists believe that:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of... society. (qtd in Warren, *Ecological Feminism* 1-2)

On a similar basis, the paper identifies Baartman as a replica of nature and parallels Baartman's trauma with that of Mother Nature's. Baartman's trauma, that is equally a trauma of nature, has inspired a number of playwrights, poets and novelists. Some examples of these works, as surveyed by Iannaccaro, are Barbara Chase-Riboud's "Hottentot Venus", Pamela Scully's "Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus", Suzan-Lori Parks's "Venus" and Clifton Crais's "Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus" (39). This literary repetition of the trauma in the present represents both the 'deferred action' that recollects the trauma and the stage of

'repetition compulsion' that repeats it with a change. Being angrily spread out at a large literary scale, the trauma of Baartman has been recollected and distanced away from the past as well as from the traumatized Blacks who might respond to it as a literary text telling a story that is not related to them some way or the other. However, this stage of recollection, that restored the trauma back from its latency to a conscious state, is what causes the trauma. The trauma recollection is followed by a further significant stage: judging the trauma from a different perspective that highlights it as no more shocking and terrible. This stage of judgment is greatly stimulated through evoking the memory of the event with much dignity and respect, unmatched before, in Baartman's large funeral and the speech uttered by Mbeki so many years later after her death. The speech and the large funeral are meant to empower Afro-Americans by giving them a chance to witness a different version of Baartman's discourse that makes Baartman a national figure buried in a formal funeral ceremony witnessed by the world as a whole. Only then the trauma is healed and the agony related to it is relieved. In this concern, Giuliana Iannaccaro argues that after the burial of Baartman and Mbeki's speech, "The Khoisann woman becomes an icon of national unity, of political responsibility, and of the need of a firm ethical position on the question of human rights and dignity; her individual trauma, if remembered and reclaimed, can contribute to heal the collective trauma of an entire nation in the present" (Iannaccaro 39). Iannaccaro's words testify a potential resolution of Baartman's trauma.

The research approaches Ferrus's and Alexander's concerned poems with one question in mind: are the two poems regarded as just repeated versions of the trauma that render it more powerful or do both of them carry a certain change that is bound to effect a therapeutic rereading of the trauma? To answer the question, the research attempts a psychoanalytic as well as an ecofeminist reading of both poems. To start with Ferrus's, Nobunye N. Levin argues that Ferrus's poem that ". . . constructs Baartman as a victim who needs to be saved"(20) plays an undeniable role in the restoration of Baartman's remnants to be buried in her own motherland (Ferrus 594). However, according to Levin, the poem fails to actually empower her; it rather adds to her state of subjugation as it does not ". . . offer any of Baartman's interiority or a sense of self determinism. She is therefore re-constituted as a tool or symbol. Ferrus' reading of Baartman therefore re-appropriates male driven articulations. She consequently fails to offer a real gendered reading of Baartman which privileges memory, the private and the experiential"(21). However, a more insightful psychoanalytic as well as ecofeminist reading of the poem proves that Ferrus's poem is a therapeutic repetition of the trauma of Baartman in the present. In the first stanza, the poetess addresses the dissected parts of Baartman claiming that she has come to take them home where everything is fairly beautiful and decent. This is also the voice of Mother Nature calling upon Baartman to come back to her home nature. This idea matches well with Susan Griffin's argument that that modern man believes that a certain dialogue is taking place between nature and woman wherein the latter could hear the murmur of winds, water or rather trees (Munroe and Laroche 2). In the opening stanza, Ferrus draws a wonderful natural landscape where Baartman's distracted remnants are to be located. Ferrus writes:

"I've come to take you home—
home, remember the veld⁶
the lush green grass beneath the big oak trees
the air is cool there and the sun does not burn.
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill"(Ferrus 593)

Nature is taking Baartman back to the pre-industrial period, before man-nature overwhelming break up, and to the Blacks' forgotten gorgeous history and graceful background. This very idea is represented in 'the big oak trees' since an oak tree, due to its

size and longevity, symbolizes history and originality. The word 'home' suggests nature and that Mother Nature has always been a human's home while 'remember' implies that woman and nature were once united and powerful before that state of alienation and defeat. On another level, the two words could be regarded as the poetess' rhetorical appeal to the trauma to come back to consciousness (home) which is where it ought to be since it is the actual home of all good memories that have no traumatic retentions.

In an ecofeminist spirit, Ferrus draws heavily upon the correlation between the fate of nature and that of woman. According to Vandana Shiva, the more nature is being exploited and ill-used, the more women are victimized. The application of technological methods in many parts of the world, which is devastating and disturbing to nature and natural objects, proves to be directly proportional with the domination and oppression inflicted upon women (Lahar 33). Hence, Ferrus calls upon Baartman, as well as upon women, to identify with nature that is a way of gaining power, protection and beauty. This back-to-nature call repeats Mills's suggestion that man-nature alienation, typical to post-industrial society, has to come to an end. Nature should no longer be man's other; they have rather to become one whole. Speculating upon this ecofeminist call for human-nature identification, A. Curry argues that identifying with nature is empowering both to humans and to nature itself. Curry writes that "Identification with the natural world, . . . , serves to allow humanity to perceive no boundaries between the human and nonhuman worlds, and thus to treat defence of the environment as self- defence..."(Curry 161). In this sense, the stanza is nature's passionate enthusiastic talk to women, in general, calling upon them to join it to be one unit defending the same rights so as to go back together to their previous state of prosperity and to become as powerful as they have once been.

This wonderful natural scene drawn by Ferrus restores Baartman's trauma with a change where the green grass, oak trees, the sun that gives light and warmth yet does not hurt and the water in the stream are set against the actual life of Baartman that is full of sexual abuses and scientific experiments. It is also set against the image of a traumatized ill-used nature. Hence, instead of the image of Baartman as a scientific object and a sexual commodity and nature that is badly exploited, Ferrus suggests an altered empowering prospective scene. Thus, Ferrus calls for an identification between woman and nature that is empowering to both sides and that defeats masculinity as the perpetrator of violence. This could be explained in terms of Simone De Beauvoir's "womb/ tomb theory" (Mills 171) that explains the reasons behind man's hostility to nature and woman alike. Simone De Beauvoir argues that:

. . . man sees woman as that which calls him back to his natural state and makes him remember his own mortality. Woman's reproductive power, her ability to create new life, is said to be rooted in the immanence of nature, which pulls man back to his body, back to the fragility of the human condition in which each new beginning each new birth, necessarily ends in death. This is the source of the womb/tomb association. Since man wants to forget his mortality, to transcend the flesh, he learns to objectify and dominate nature and to dominate woman as the representative of nature. (Mills 170-71).

This sets the idea of man's vulnerability and mortality in sharp contrast with woman's immortality due to her power of regeneration. Since this very idea of regeneration is deeply rooted in nature, it could only be aroused by woman-nature reunion. Ferrus talks neither about a grave nor a funeral but rather about Mother Nature where one has to go in life and death. This is a promise of rebirth and transcendence as nature can help her to transcend her human limitation once united with her.

A hasty look at the first stanza of the poem might dismantle its wisdom by misinterpreting its deep implication. Setting Baartman in a natural context might be seen as identifying her

more with the oppressed side, nature, and therefore adding to her trauma; it might also suggest that it is meant to show that she is badly exploited as 'earth others'. However, those "earth others" are all in a prosperous thriving state. This joyful description of a marvelous scene of nature is intended to be a repetition, with a change, of the trauma of natural objects to help Baartman, in particular, and the Blacks, in general, to see both traumas differently, nature's trauma as well as Baartman's. Nature itself calls upon Baartman to believe that her own trauma of exploitation has come to an end and suggests that she herself has to transcend her traumatic state and become stable.

Unlike the promise of salvation suggested in the first stanza, the second stanza functions as a provocative repetition of the trauma with its brutality and ruthlessness as an attempt to bridge the gulf between the unconscious and the conscious to effect a recollection of the trauma that is revealed as fresh and devastating as it once was. Ferrus writes:

I have come to wretch you away—
 away from the poking eyes
 of the man-made monster
 who lives in the dark
 with his clutches of imperialism
 who dissects your body bit by bit
 who likens your soul to that of Satan
 and declares himself the ultimate god (Ferrus 593)

The poetess (nature) claims that she has come to rescue Baartman from the brutal Doctor who dissected her body after her death. The stanza highlights the way White colonists regard themselves as divine gods and look down upon the Blacks as evil spirits and devils. The word "poking eyes" implies haunting which is one symptom of trauma. Describing the Doctor as "the man-made monster who lives in the dark" is Ferrus's further suggested change in the trauma's original version. It strips the trauma of its so-called noble justification: the claim of science and takes into pieces the image of the white Doctor as a representative of civilization and illuminated minds. He is reduced to be an ignorant and brutal man rather than a researcher seeking scientific achievement.

Like the first stanza, the third one is very promising, sympathetic and emotional. The poetess/nature claims to have come to take Baartman to rest and to relieve all the pains and suffering of her much tormented soul. Ferrus writes:

I have come to soothe your heavy heart
 I offer my bosom to your weary soul
 I will cover your face with the palms of my hands
 I will run my lips over lines in your neck
 I will feast my eyes on the beauty of you
 and I will sing for you
 for I have come to bring you peace (Ferrus 593)

These lines carry a promise of love, peace and trauma reconciliation. The words, "heavy heart" and "weary soul" suggest a troublesome trauma. They are put in sharp contrast with the word "bosom" that suggests security in becoming one whole with nature. Mother-Nature is personified as a lover in words like 'bosom', 'the palms of my hands', 'lips', 'eyes' and 'sing'. Such images reflect intimacy, tenderness and love. They also repeat the same impression given in the first stanza: Nature is no more a traumatized figure; it is rather experiencing a peace of mind, relief, satisfaction and reconciliation. The repetition of "I will" reflects determination, resolution and authority that are irrelevant to a traumatized figure. The line "I will feast my eyes on the beauty of you" dismantles another part of the trauma's related

portrayal of Baartman as an ugly black figure. The trauma is again duplicated with a change that weakens its claim and destroys the stereotypical image of black as ugly deformed figures.

The fourth and last stanza echoes the ecofeminist notion that man was once part of nature before their troublesome separation in post-industrial society. Here, Baartman is summoned back to her home (nature) where every object is familiar with her and calls her back . Ferrus writes:

I have come to take you home
 where the ancient mountains shout your name.
 I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,
 your blankets are covered in buchu and mint ,
 the proteas stand in yellow and white-
 I have come to take you home
 where I will sing for you
 for you have brought me peace (Ferrus 593)

The fact that the ancient mountains shout Baartman's name indicates an intimate relationship, between her and nature, one that goes back to ancient times. The poem ends with a literal suggestion that if Baartman complies with nature's appeal and call for reunion, she will experience reconciliation and harmony like that experienced by nature; this is indicated in the last line" you have brought me peace". The stanza could be taken as nature's appeal to Baartman's trauma to be reconciled since it has been represented differently.

Like Wordsworth, Ferrus's back-to- nature claim represents in each stanza one aspect of nature. Nature is depicted as having a healing therapeutic nurturing power that inspires love, solace and a promise of wholeness. Speculating upon wordsworth's romantic perspective of nature, Faria Saeed Khan put it that, "Wordsworth employees nature in his poems as a remedy to a diseased world and shows how nature heals, nurtures and restores the soul from the enervating effects of industrialism and materialism. For Wordsworth nature is not just a beautiful scene but something far deeper. It has inner life of her own and man is part of it. He expresses a strong sense of relationship with the world of nature"(26). In this sense, the poem alternates between manifestations of attempts of trauma recollection, each time with a change, and promises of trauma resolution offered by nature's most kind call for nature-human reunion.

Falling into two parts, Elizabeth Alexander's "The Venus Hottentot" is an attempt to shake off Baartman's long silencing and subjugation by giving her a chance to speak out her own story and how she was able to survive such horrible conditions as an ill- used black female. The first part, Cuvier, is a monologue uttered by the anatomist Georges Cuiver who dissected Baartman's corpse after her death. The word "genitalia" (265) bears witness to Cuvier's racist background as well as his colonist belief in the Whites' supremacy to the Blacks. Cuvier is scientifically concerned with Baartman's genitalia that highlights the biological difference between the Black and the White and that testifies the raciest notion that " . . . people of African descent and women possess immutable biological characteristics marking their inferiority to elite White men . . ." (Collins138). The monologue ironically starts with the word science repeated three times: "Science, science, and science! Everything is beautiful" (Alexander 265), an allusion to the scientific revolution, that is, in ecofeminists' thought, the era of nature and woman subjugation. Referring to green-revolution technology and its effect upon nature, Stephanie Lahar puts it that, "Green-revolution methods include growing crops in monocultures using genetically engineered seed, chemical pesticides, deep plowing, and intensive irrigation, which permanently destroys indigenous soils"(33). Lahar goes further highlighting the fact that such green revolution that is devastating to nature is equally devastating to woman. She argues that the more green-revolution technology is applied in a

certain area, the more women, in the concerned region, are subjugated and oppressed (33). Evoking this directly proportional woman-nature relationship through the repetition of the word science, Alexander seeks to show that science is responsible for nature/woman domination. This repetition, then, is intended to attract the reader's attention to the fact that science is the main cause of Baartman's trauma as well as of nature's; it is the cause of trauma of what ecofeminists call 'earth others'.

With the spirit of a devoted scientist, Cuvier speaks very enthusiastically about the prospective scientific results he might achieve. He says: "Elegant facts await me" (Alexander 266). He is amazed with what he sees under the sheet of glass as he examines Baartman's dissected segments and rejoices at the fact that Baartman's genitalia will be kept in a jar in the Musée de l'Homme on a shelf above French physician, anatomist and anthropologist Broca's brain (Alexander 265). This portrays the way Baartman has been objectified to serve Cuvier's own scientific ambitions and to achieve a personal interest disguised under the claim of serving science's purpose. He, as a representative of imperialism seeks to possess her by dissecting her body. This is made clear when he says: "Small things in this world are mine" (Alexander 266). However, such literal dissection of a black body effects a more devastating psychic fragmentation of the Black race as a whole that has become, as a result, traumatized and devastated. Thus, Cuvier's is an imperialist's ambitions rather than a scientist's. In this respect Werbanowska writes: "The anatomist obviously identifies knowledge with power: dissecting the woman's body, minutely scrutinizing and describing it piece by piece is a way of conquering and possessing her" (22).

As in Ferrus's poem, the monologue functions as a replicated version of the trauma in the present that seeks to effect a trauma recollection to be reasoned differently later on. However, since change is crucial to the recollected trauma, Alexander's proposed modification in her retold version of Baartman's trauma lies in the fact that Cuvier's quest for knowledge appears not to be purely scientific; he is actually seeking personal glory and fame and is rather preoccupied with the imperialist quest for evidential justifications for the White supremacy theory. The theme of the poem, as declared by Alexander herself, is "how we are seen and who we are inside" (Werbanowska 22). This theme, as Werbanowska argues, is best illustrated in the contradiction between the first part, the monologue uttered by Cuvier himself, that expresses the way he sees Baartman as "Cranial measurements and genitalia" and the second part, uttered by Baartman herself, that reflects a completely different aspect of her unseen by him (23). However, the research's claim is that the theme of the poem is the way one sees the trauma and the way he /she has to see it. In this lies a chance for trauma resolving.

The second part of the poem is uttered by Baartman herself; she is given the right to speak for the first time so as to have her own words into sharp contrast with Cuvier's. Hence, the second change that attends Alexander's retold version of Baartman's story is that she gives her agency by giving her the power of self-expression and dismantles not only the silencing process that has been inflicted upon her for so long but also that inflicted upon the Black race as a whole. The fact that these lines are uttered by the major traumatized figure indicates a recollection of the trauma and its move from the unconscious to the conscious, a state that finds no such literal expression in Ferrus's poem since Ferrus was writing in appeal to the restoration of Baartman's body and hence, it has to be less forthright in empowering Baartman in such a manner so as to effect more sympathy. Werbanowska argues that: "By making Baartman the speaker of the second much longer, narrative part of the poem—and apparently the dominant one—Alexander undertakes an attempt to re-subjectify the woman who had constantly been objectified by the white male gaze" (23).

In the first stanza of part two, Baartman describes a natural scene where the sky is blue ,the sun is shining ,the clouds that used to go through her cage everyday has been scattered away and there remains in the scene Baartman, herself a bare black woman ,set in sharp contrast with the blue sky. Alexander writes :

I am a black cutout against
a captive blue sky, pivoting
nude so the paying audience
can view my naked buttocks. (Alexander 266)

The stanza juxtaposes the two traumas” Baartman's and nature's. Nature's trauma is greatly highlighted in the word "captive blue sky", however, the clear “unexpected” atmosphere suggests a prospective resolving of the trauma of nature. The beautiful natural scene is meant to be an optimistic manifestation of a different version of nature's trauma. Nature is captive yet still can maintain a sense of beauty and grace and still has a promising aspect. Since nature's trauma can be resolved, Baartman's can be resolved too. The change in the trauma, made by Alexander, is made clear in the very expression 'unexpected sun' and 'the clouds that most days sift into this cage where I am working have dispersed". The fact that the clouds used to go through Baartman's cage, identifies nature with Baartman as two objectified caged Others ,where the former belongs to “earth Others” and the latter belongs to “human Others”. The clouds's repeated visits to Baartman's cage imply a go-between figure that is sent by nature to Baartman to convince her to come back to her home, nature. Here lies a further difference between Alexander's poem and Ferrus's. Ferrus 's nature is more powerful as it is given the authority of speech; she talks directly to Baartman with much determination and confidence. Alexander's nature, on the other hand, is not given such agency; it secretly sends her messengers (clouds) to Baartman. Implying that nature's trauma can be resolved at the very beginning of her speech is both optimistic and suggestive. The disappearance of the clouds that kept on visiting Baartman in her cage implies the disappearance of symptoms of her trauma exemplified in terrible visions and suggests a positive step towards trauma resolving.

In the second and third stanzas, Baartman speaks with much power and authority; she is empowered by highlighting the fact that her career was a choice and decision made by her. She seems to have been following the ' move from rags to riches' American myth as she aspires for “half the profits”, “dresses” and to "return to her family a duchess"(Alexander 266). The repetition of 'I' in “I am called ‘Venus Hottentot’. I left Capetown with a promise of revenue”(Alexander 266) shows a desire for self-definition and shows authority as well; it is also intended to highlight her individuality and to destabilize her image as an object.

The first line of the third stanza "That was years ago" refers to the long period of the trauma's latency till the present time when it is provoked and summoned up to a conscious state. Stanza three and four together express Baartman’s dissatisfaction with the experience she has once chosen and has proved later on to be devastating and unpleasant .The poem is a severe criticism directed towards people and life in London where "circuses are florid and filthy”, crowded with “cabbage-smelling citizens”who are merely concerned with fake appearances regardless to what is behind"(Alexander 266). Having no philosophical insight of the true meaning of things, they are preoccupied with a very silly superficial question “Is it muscle? bone? or fat?”(Alexander 266). They think of nothing beyond. People there are queer; her neighbor is the "Sapient Pig" (Alexander 266) who is a pretentious sophisticated brute who has “hooves”and who follows the claim of superstition as he plays cards to tell the future. Another type of people there is the fool or rather the "Prince Kar-mi, who arches like a rubber tree and stares back at the crowd from under the crook of his knee (Alexander 266-267).

Thus, Alexander's method of trauma healing is to subvert the stereotypical representation of the two races and the image of the Whites as superior to the Blacks to effect a certain change. Alexander depicts the Black race as more enlightened and sagacious than White representatives. Baartman who is stereotyped as a caged savage animal, is watched by uncivilized disgusting audience of the Whites. Comparing the part of the poem uttered by the civilized anatomist and the one uttered by Baartman, her speech proves to be more wise and meaningful; unlike him she can see through people and is never deceived by appearances. This is made clear in the way she could skillfully analyze everybody around. Cuvier's random words appear to be immature and childish motivated by an irresistible lust for personal recognition built upon a poor black female's remnants.

Werbanowska argues that Alexander's Baartman is alternately speaking as the still- alive black female or the dissected remnants of her; however, she is heard neither by the audience when caged like animals nor by the anatomist when dissected as a scientific object under experiment (24). In terms of Freud's trauma theory, this shift of Alexander's implies a shift between a latent unconscious trauma and a restored one. The part spoken by Baartman's remnants represents the trauma in its latent unconscious state, while the part spoken by the surviving Baartman represents the resurrected trauma.

Stanza five represents the trauma recollection process in progress; the stanza is uttered by the surviving Baartman who can look in the lithograph engravings to see random memories of hers. The engravings symbolize the unconscious with all shadow experiences displayed before her eyes where she could discern the memory of "The Ball of Duchess DuBarry" and the scene of "belles dames" watching her much eerie spectacle "mad eyed" till they "swoon". Party ornaments are seen dancing at her huge hips that are depicted in the engravings as "swollen and luminous as a planet" (Alexander 267). Alexander ironically likens Baartman's "huge and shining" buttocks to a planet that needs much exploration like the space; She ridicules the Whites' preoccupation with a black female's buttocks as if it has been an area of scientific research. This dismantles the Whites' enlightenment and sagacity and their claim to have greatly participated in the world's scientific revolution. It is, in addition, a shot aiming at science that, according to ecofeminists, is closely related to the deteriorated degenerated state of sides, nature and woman.

Baartman reduces Cuvier to be a magician and his whole jobs as no more than superstition. Ridiculing the findings he comes out with after exploring her genitalia, she says: "I half expect him to pull silk scarves from inside me, paper poppies, then a rabbit!" (Alexander 267). Against this imperfect image of a white man, Baartman is given much agency as she describes herself as black woman who has a good command of different languages that Cuvier has no knowledge of their existence. She says: "I speak English. I speak Dutch. I speak a little French as well and languages Monsieur Cuvier will never know have names" (Alexander 267). The repetition of ' I ' is one of Baartman's signifying mechanisms. Alexander revisits the theme of the contrast between "how we are seen and who we are inside" in "He complains at my scent and does not think I comprehend". Again, he judges her by her appearance and knows nothing beyond. As Werbanowska argues "Her body may be open for penetration—both metaphorically by the spectators' gaze and literally by Cuvier's surgical tools—but her mind remains an area ultimately inaccessible for her oppressors" (24).

Alexander's alternate presentation of Baartman in a subjugated state and then in a state of agency repeats the suggested theme of the poem, trauma as it is and as it should be seen. The part where she is subjugated testifies a recollection of the trauma whereas the other testifies a change added to the trauma's retold version. Having extolled her own acquaintance with a variety of language, Baartman goes back to discuss the trauma's details and how she eats bad food, in a gloomy atmosphere where the sun is absent and suffers from

nostalgia(Alexander 267). Her nostalgia for her country's sun and mother's sadza symbolizes the trauma of nature and draws a gloomy portrait of nature without the sun; however, it has been resurrected throughout the poem with a hopeful change. This description of the absence of nature's most powerful element, the sun, is set against the portrait she draws at the first stanza that depicts nature as beautiful and optimistic. This is again the difference between the trauma and the way we have to see it. In the second part of stanza eight, Baartman refers to some symptoms that trouble a traumatized psyche namely visions and day dreams. Before the trauma is strongly evoked to come to consciousness, Baartman used to have some visions about having daughters of her own. She identifies her daughters with nature, plants and animals, as they wear "banana skirts and ostrich-feather fans" (Alexander 267), an indication of a prospective reunion with nature.

Baartman is, then, given agency since she has the power to hide part of herself which is her mind. She says, "Since my own genitals are public I have made other parts private" (Alexander 268). Even in her own silence she is given agency as she says "In my silence I possess mouth, larynx, brain, in a single gesture" (Alexander 268). Hence, silence is not enforced upon her; it is rather a further signifying mechanism used by Baartman to keep her thoughts and feelings for herself and to deny the others any access them. This implies that the black race has a sort of knowledge denied to the Whites as long as the latter never exert the least effort to know the Blacks' real nature; they are only concerned with a justification for White superiority over the Blacks. Once again, Baartman, has had fancies as she imagines herself as "a painted Nubian archer" with gold leaf and diamonds through her hair (Alexander 268).

Representing a further change in trauma version, Alexander empowers Baartman who can still use her mother tongue (Xhosa) (Alexander 268); this is meant to highlight the fact that she has a background, history and language.

In stanza ten and eleven, Baartman expresses her wish to dissect Cuvier's body, as he once did to hers, keep his heart in a jar and "place it on a low shelf in a white man's museum so the whole world could see it was shriveled and hard, geometric, deformed, unnatural" (Alexander 268). He chooses her genitals to be kept in a jar as he thinks them what mark the Blacks as inferior to the Whites and she chooses his black heart because it is what marks the Whites as inferior to the Blacks. Alexander ends her poem with a sort of subversion of the myth of the Blacks as weird, deformed race; she ascribes blackness, deformity, weirdness and stereotypical qualities of the Blacks to the heart of a white black male. This subversion is her last added touch to the recollected trauma of Baartman.

Conclusion

The paper juxtaposes the two traumas of the exploitation of a black female, Baartman, and that of the disintegration of nature, highlighting a relationship between being traumatized figures and being separated from Mother- Nature; it suggests a hope for trauma resolution made available through Freud's proposed trauma theory that resolves latent unconscious traumas and clears out any traumatic residues. The paper sets forth the idea that every literary work that repeats a trauma plays the role of "repetition compulsion", suggested by Freud's theory; it repeatedly replicates the trauma every time with a change to be positively seen by those who might have been destructively affected by it. Beside Freud's strategy, the paper builds on ecofeminist's call for a going back to a state of identification with nature that has once existed. The application of a psychoanalytic as well as ecofeminist approach to trauma resolving on Ferrus's and Alexander's two concerned poems comes up with the conclusion that both poems play the role of "repetition compulsion" and render the retold versions of trauma with considerable changes so as to be seen differently by traumatic minds; it shows both poetic texts as greatly supportive to their declared objective. Every stanza of Ferrus's &

Alexander's poems proceeds with two purposes in mind: Replicating Baartman's trauma (nature's trauma) every time with a change so as to be resurrected from its unconscious state with a positive perspective and calling upon human beings to come back to be one whole with nature. The two poems give a chance to utterly revolutionize the traumatized Blacks's view of the trauma and help them to see it differently after taking into pieces its shocking element. At this point, the effect of the trauma itself is mitigated and a sort of coming- to-terms with it as less devastating occurs.

Comparing the way both poetesses commit themselves to the psychoanalytic and ecofeminist approaches, the research highlights the fact that though they have strictly followed them, they part company in highlighting the more empowered side (woman or nature). In fact, Alexander's Baartman is starkly more powerful than Ferrus's while Ferrus's nature is more powerful than Alexander's. This means that Ferrus's ecological claim is higher than that of Alexander's and that Alexander builds more on the psychoanalytic claim of trauma resolving. However, though Ferrus's portrayal of nature as more powerful than Baartman might be more logical so far as woman could be regarded as one part of a whole (nature), yet, Alexander 's Baartman that is more powerful might guarantee a more effective empowering change balanced with the more detailed trauma described by her as well as by Cuvier. This also might be due to the fact that Alexander's poem depicts Cuvier as a speaking object, a portrayal that has to be greatly surpassed by a more powerful portrayal of Baartman rather than of nature, since the contest here is between a white male and a black female rather than a white male and nature. However, the fact remains that in both cases, Ferrus's and Alexander's; the changes are significant and benevolent.

However, the function of both poems is merely to effect trauma recollection and the process of repetition compulsion that carries a therapeutic change showing no decisive evidence that an actual resolution is really effected. This might be Ferrus's and Alexander's methods of highlighting the fact that neither Black female trauma nor nature's is resolved. Still a process of identification with ecological other, nature, is crucially required. Hence the two poems are no more than poetic attempts that address a traumatized generation of black females calling upon them to see their trauma differently and to reunite with nature for a prospective power. Once they become one powerful whole with nature that has no traumatic retentions, black females can hope for attaining their rights.

The fact that the two poems seem superficially to be concerned with just one trauma, namely Baartman's, however, a further comprehensive trauma of nature is being juxtaposed with the superficially conceived one, gives both poetic works more depth and weight. Such duality is highly evocative as it implies that juxtaposition rather than identification has become the most problematic law governing all types of relationships. This also implies the juxtaposed worlds of the conscious and the unconscious as well as of human beings and ecological beings. In so doing, the study proposes a need for a state of intertextuality between juxtaposed worlds, beings and items that can never meet at one compromising point. In addition, such parallelism implies the complexities of the relationship between nature and woman. It evokes to mind, in an ecofeminist spirit, one major conclusion which is the fact that living in a subjugated environment or nature, woman can be nothing but an equally subjugated object. Hence, women, as part of a greater macrocosm and natural scene should inevitably be traumatized figures as long as the trauma of Mother- Nature is still in progress .This is why both poets have suggested, as a first step of healing Baartman's trauma ,the resolution of Mother- Nature trauma, an idea reflected in a prosperous portrayal of nature in Ferrus's case and a disappearance of the usual manifestations of natural disturbances in Alexander's.

The study, then, finds clear affinity between both poetesses' psychoanalytic and ecofeministic stance; both replicate the trauma and suggest in an ecofeminist perspective that trauma resolving lies in woman-nature reunion and the going back to pre-industrial society's state of man-nature identification. Despite the great disparity in length between both poems, Alexander's being the longer, they both serve to successfully perform the same purpose, and still the fact that Ferrus's poem was actually greatly subservient in the restoration of Baartman's dissected body to be buried, as it ought to be, in her own country land can never be disregarded .

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